

Portland, OR Rewarding Youth Achievement Program

Profile of Partners: The Portland, Oregon RYA program is run by Worksystems, Inc., a non-profit agency that manages public and private contracts to connect people and jobs and to meet employers' needs. Key partners include Pacificorp, Intel, IBM, Bridge Builders, Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, Providence Health Systems, the Haven Project and our education partners.

Area Served: Portland's Enterprise Community consists of North, Northeast and a slice of downtown Portland, an area that includes five high schools: Roosevelt, Jefferson, Grant, Benson and Lincoln. Included also are nine alternative schools. The poverty rate for the area served by Jefferson and Roosevelt is approximately 36% compared to 7% in Multnomah County. More than 16% of its households receive public assistance compared to 6.5% county-wide.

Profile of Participants/Outcomes: Participants are evenly split between males and females. 62% are African-American, 28% Caucasian, and 13% are Asian-American. 57% of enrolled youth are 14-16 year olds, with the remainder 17 and above.

Total number of students served: 350

Students returning to school: 331

Students enrolled in post-secondary: 19

Improved academics, especially in math and science: 120

Success Stories:

- The University Park Community Center in North Portland holds the latest technology – hundreds of thousands of dollars in computer equipment and software, but no one was using it. More than a dozen RYA students participated in a weeklong mini-MBA course and tackled this real life problem. The students developed a marketing and business plan for the Community Center. Their creativity impressed a community review panel consisting of a manager from Intel, Dean of University of Portland School of Business, and Portland City Commissioner Jim Francesconi. Commissioner Francesconi was so impressed that he invited the youth to present their ideas to the entire City Council - and to ask for \$50,000 to put their plans into action. The Council unanimously approved the plan. Commissioner Francesconi has also created the Portland Youth Entrepreneurial Alliance, aimed at creating youth-run businesses, with the hopes of these students and other RYA students leading this initiative.
- **Unique Learning Account:** A \$500 learning account is earned by each student to apply towards their next educational experience, contingent upon their meeting program participation expectations. This RYA-Portland innovation has been developed from the lessons learned through worksystems' USDOL Individual Training Account Demonstration Grant.
- The City of Portland has created the Youth Entrepreneurial Alliance for profit enterprises. With strong support from Portland Public Schools & local colleges &

universities, Portland's intention is to continue to support the high achieving youth of the Enterprise Community, through entrepreneurial efforts and additional public sector fundraising.

Profiles of Services for Youth

- **Enriched Summer Experience:** The Mini MBA Immersion School is a task-based entrepreneurial education program for students designed by the University of Portland. In it, students learn PowerPoint and are taught how to create business plans, techniques of negotiation, and how to dress for success.
- **Math and Science Enhancement:** A variety of partners include RYA youth in ongoing activities focused on enhancing math and science and offer support to new ones as well. Some of those activities include the Science Fair and Symposium for Apprenticeship in Science & Engineering (ASE); the Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS) Classes; numerous job shadows and site visits at Intel and IBM; and the SEMI (Semiconductor Equipment Materials Int'l) Institute, a 4-day career institute offering in-depth exposure to careers in the semiconductor industry.
- **Year-Round Activities:** A wide variety of activities take place throughout the year, including academic tutoring provided by Upward Bound; mentoring for students interested in the theatre arts provided by the Haven Project; and Career Exploration Sessions where professionals offer insight and guidance to students interested in various careers. Numerous local employers provide internships, job shadowing and company tours. Providence Youth Academy, part of Worksystems Inc.'s Employer Participation Model, is a unique opportunity that allows RYA youth to access the careers available in the health care industry. After intensive industry and company-specific training, the Youth Academy then helps place students in jobs at Providence Health Systems. Programs designed to assist students in areas of entrepreneurship are the most innovative part of our educational programs.
- **College Bound Assistance:** College bound students receive assistance through monthly college matriculation sessions provided through the Bridge Builders. These sessions give students an introduction to college student life and help prepare them for admission. Students tour local colleges, research other schools, receive admissions assistance, participate in financial aid discussions, and have open question and answer sessions with panels of current college students. A yearly National College Tour is offered to 36 students, giving them the opportunity to visit Ivy League schools in Northern California, Southern California, and the Boston area.

Roles for Partners:

Linkages to Existing Programs: The Portland RYA program has linkages with many other local programs. These include Upward Bound; MESA (Math Engineering Science Achievement Program); ASE (Apprenticeships in Science and Engineering); Zoo Animal- Keepers Program

(ZAP) for internships; Bridge Builders Rite of Passage Program; Business Education Compact, ZAP, Youth Opportunity Center (YO!); and Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI).

Private/Public Sector Commitments: Mentoring relationships have been developed through the Bridge Builders Rite of Passage Program. Numerous organizations provide internships for students including the City of Portland; the Haven Project, Multnomah County; PacifiCorp, and Portland Parks and Recreation. PacifiCorp, Providence and Intel are the primary private sector partners, although numerous small business owners provide important relationships and experience for the youth.

Secondary /Post Secondary Commitments:

- Roosevelt, Jefferson, Grant, Benson and Lincoln High Schools provide in-school counselors, meeting space, and recruitment assistance.
- The University of Portland has provided the Mini MBA School, college fairs, and admissions and financial aid sessions.
- Portland State University has provided English composition courses and meeting space for the RYA program and its participants.

Key Elements in Program's Success

1) Strong Relationship with Schools

Strong relations with schools led to better communication and understanding from staff and higher student participation. Schools are able to provide facility space for meetings, outreach to students. RYA's success extends services the school provides.

2) Offering wide variety of opportunities

Students' interests differ and directly effect participation levels. We were able to offer much variety i.e., college tours, job shadows, teen summits, personal growth experiences, etc.; something for everyone.

3) Bringing on other partners

More partners has meant more resources and opportunities for youth.

4) Getting Student Feedback

We get students feedback and construct our program accordingly, asking students what they wanted and then delivering. We provide a combination of what they want (fun activities) and what they need (educational experiences). Students have responded by participating as they have seen their ideas being implemented.

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